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INTRODUCTION

Regulated trapping plays an important role in the management of furbearers. Like hunting and fishing, trapping is regulated and enforced by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Regulated trapping benefits society by minimizing furbearer damages to private property and crops, protecting habitats, maintaining an ecological balance between furbearers and other wildlife species and minimizing the spread of disease. As one aspect of Indiana's furbearer management program, the Division of Fish & Wildlife conducted a trapper's survey following the 2005-06 trapping season to estimate furbearer harvest and trapping pressure. A brief summary of that information follows.

METHODS

The trapper's survey consisted of mailing a questionnaire, cover letter and postage paid return envelope to each individual who purchased a resident trapping license during 2005-06. Recipients of the questionnaire were asked to record their county of residence and whether they trapped during 2005-06. Active trappers were then requested to provide information on the number of days trapped, number and type of furbearers harvested and the number and type of traps used. Regional data was summarized according to Indiana's 6 physiographic regions (Figure 1).

RESULTS

Regulated trapping seasons vary for each furbearer species (Table 1). During Indiana's 2005-06 regulated trapping season, 2,994 trapping licenses were sold to Indiana residents, an increase of 4.3% from 2003-04. The overall response rate to the questionnaire was 50.6%. Of the responding trappers, 79.1% actually trapped a portion of the trapping season.

Figure 1. Indiana's fur harvest regions.

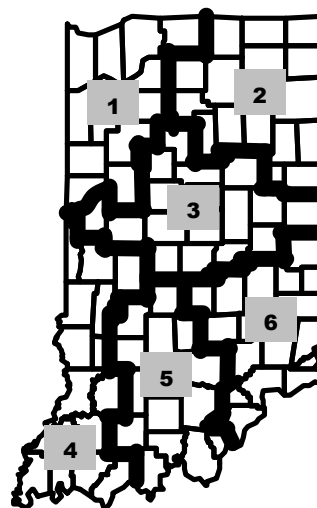


Table 1. Indiana's regulated trapping seasons.

Species	Trap
Muskrat, Mink, Long-tailed Weasel, Raccoon, Opossum	Nov 15 – Jan 31
Beaver	Nov 15 – Mar 15
Red Fox, Gray Fox, Skunk	Oct 15 – Jan 31
Coyote	Oct 15 – Mar 15

The percentage of questionnaire responses was regionally proportional to the number of trapping license purchased (Table 2), suggesting a representative sample of trappers across Indiana. The most trapping licenses were purchased in the northeast.



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Table 2. Percentage of trapping licenses sold and trapper questionnaires returned for Indiana's 2005-06 trapper season.

	% Trapping License Sold	Percent Questionnaires Returned
Region 1	14%	14%
Region 2	31%	33%
Region 3	18%	15%
Region 4	12%	13%
Region 5	12%	12%
Region 6	13%	12%

HARVEST ESITIMATES

Furbearer harvest tends to vary according to weather conditions, pelt prices and an assortment of other extrinsic factors. Such factors must be taken into consideration when comparing differences between annual harvest estimates.

Muskrat and raccoon were the two most harvested species (Table 3). Compared to 2003-04, harvest estimates for muskrat, beaver, mink and skunk increased 1.0%, 41.2%, 1.9% and 47.6%, respectively, and tend to reflect increasing pelt prices (Table 4). Harvest estimates for all other species declined.

Table 3. Estimated harvest of furbearers by trappers during Indiana's 2003-04 and 2005-06 regulated trapping seasons.

Species	2003-04	2005-06
Muskrat	28,937	29,200
Raccoon	29,715	21,552
Red Fox	2,238	826
Gray Fox	366	166
Coyote	4,520	4,310
Opossum	6,704	4,626
Beaver	2,700	3,815
Mink	1,544	1,574
Skunk	630	930
Long-tail Weasel	20	12
Total	77,374	67,011

Table 4. Average pelt prices during Indiana's 2003-04 and 2005-06 regulated trapping seasons.

Species	2003-04	2005-06
Muskrat	\$2.65	\$3.57
Raccoon	\$8.42	\$5.90
Red Fox	\$18.50	\$15.11
Gray Fox	\$15.92	\$17.28
Coyote	\$13.34	\$10.38
Opossum	\$1.51	\$1.16
Beaver	\$11.65	\$13.48
Mink	\$9.08	\$14.73
Skunk	\$2.67	\$2.62
Long-tail Weasel	\$0.80	\$3.67

TRAPPING EFFORT

A total of 2,174,478 trap-nights were estimated statewide during 2005-06, a 29.6% increase from 2003-04 (Table 5). The number of trap-nights was greatest in the northeastern region of Indiana, which is partly related to the number of trappers and abundance of furbearers found in that region.

Table 5. Number of trap-nights per fur harvest region during the 2005-06 regulated trapping season.

Region	Trap-Nights	% Change
Region 1	258,662	22.1
Region 2	738,692	23.7
Region 3	265,618	41.9
Region 4	281,637	24.8
Region 5	355,896	93.6
Region 6	273,973	1.0
Statewide	2,174,478	29.6

Statewide, the average trapper maintained 15 traps per day and trapped 30 days per season. Trap selection varied by species targeted but foothold traps were used by 72.3% of trappers while 58% used 110 body-gripping traps, 44% used 220 body-gripping traps, 35% used snares and 27% used 330 body-gripping traps.

Thanks to all the trappers who responded to the 2005-06 Trapper's Survey.

